

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**JOANNE M. RAVEL**



Joanne M. Ravel (July 27, 1924 - June 28, 2018)

Our longtime colleague and friend Joanne M. Ravel, Professor Emerita and Ashbel Smith Professor Emerita of Chemistry and Biochemistry at The University of Texas at Austin, passed away in Austin, Texas, on June 28, 2018—just shy of her ninety-fourth birthday. A lifelong resident of Austin, born on July 27, 1924, to Joseph B. and Sarah Cywan Macow, Joanne was the youngest of ten children. Her parents emigrated from Poland in the early 1900s with her oldest sister; her other siblings were born in New York. She idolized her mother, who spoke with a heavy accent, had no formal schooling, and never learned to read and write English, but ran her large household on a tight, depression-era budget with common sense and unfailing good nature. After attending Austin High School, Joanne attended The University of Texas, where she received a B.S. in Chemistry in 1944 followed by two graduate degrees with Dr. William Shive: an M.S. in 1946, and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry in 1954.

Joanne then worked as a research scientist with the Clayton Biochemical Institute at UT. In 1972, she became the first woman Professor in the Chemistry Department at UT Austin. For

over thirty years, she taught and inspired thousands of Longhorns studying protein biosynthesis. A popular teacher and a role model to many, Joanne taught large, introductory biochemistry courses and supervised a number of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Because of her own experiences, Joanne became an exceptional mentor to many women, both graduate and undergraduate, who were struggling with uncertainties about entering into the then very male-dominated field of academic biochemistry. Although several of her former students went on to become deans and presidents of major universities, the campus environment was different in those days. Once, when wanting to illustrate the role of adrenalin in the “fight or flight” response for her students, she pulled a track-and-field starter pistol out of her handbag in her class and fired off a round to initiate that signal transduction cascade in all her students!

Joanne was known nationally and internationally for her research on the mechanisms of protein biosynthesis. Supported by the Biochemical Institute and grants from the National Institutes of Health, she and her research group published over 100 articles in the area. The major objectives of their research were to elucidate the mechanism of action of ATP (adenosine triphosphate) and various eukaryotic initiation factors (eIFs) in the initiation process of protein biosynthesis and to determine what aspects of the primary, secondary, or tertiary structure of mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid) affect the efficiency of translation. Using highly purified preparations of eIF-2, 3, 4A, 4B, and 4F from wheat germ and a variety of naturally occurring mRNAs, they contributed greatly to our understanding of the physical and functional properties of the various subunits of the functional composition of eIF-3 and insight into how eIF-2 interacts with GDP (guanosine diphosphate), Met-tRNA(i), and mRNA in protein biosynthesis.

Promoted to Full Professor in 1974, Joanne was named an Ashbel Smith Professor, one of UT Austin’s highest honors, in 1979; she retired in 1990. In 1991, she and her husband Jerome

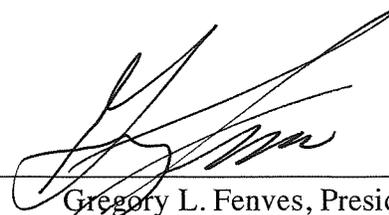
(Jerry) established the Joanne M. Ravel Regents Endowed Fellowship in Biochemistry to support graduate students in the UT Austin College of Natural Sciences.

The story of Joanne meeting her physician husband Jerry has all the elements of a Texas romance. They met at the Texas-Texas A&M game in College Station on Thanksgiving Day 1945. Having just returned from the war, Jerry was attending the game with his brother, one of Joanne's classmates. They were engaged on New Year's Day and married on March 23, 1946, just four months after they met. Jerry was always very proud of Joanne's accomplishments. Joanne and Jerry enjoyed supporting the arts including the symphony, ballet, and opera. As a passionate educator and researcher, Joanne also enjoyed travelling the world with Jerry and visiting with her former students around the globe. Jerry Ravel died in 2003.

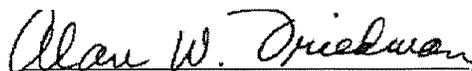
Establishment of a medical school in Austin was a lifelong dream for Joanne and Jerome. Joanne established the Jerome and Joanne Ravel Endowed Scholarship in the Dell Medical School for students wanting to specialize in primary care as a way of honoring Jerome's many years of service to the community.

Joanne is survived by her daughter Margaret (Missy) Elman and husband Bryan Bruns of San Diego; and her son Stephen (Steve) Ravel and wife Suzanne of Austin. She is also survived by four grandchildren: Emily Elman and husband Nate Flansburgh, Jeremy Elman and wife Erin, Ben Ravel, and Rachel Ravel, as well as four great-grandchildren—Stella and Oliver Flansburgh, and Henry and Elise Elman.

Joanne was a wonderful colleague and a friend and mentor to many. Our department, our college, our University, and our community have all benefited greatly from her being among us.



Gregory L. Fenves, President  
The University of Texas at Austin



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary  
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Marvin L. Hackert (Chair), Dean R. Appling, Karen S. Browning, and Professor Emeritus G. Barrie Kitto.